

CALIFORNIA

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

PODIATRISTS

CALIFORNIA OCCUPATIONAL GUIDE - NUMBER 298
2003

INTEREST AREA
SOCIAL



WHAT DOES A PODIATRIST DO?

PODIATRISTS, also known as Doctors of Podiatric Medicine, are medical specialists concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of disorders and diseases affecting the foot, ankle, and the lower leg. These conditions include foot deformities, ankle and foot injuries, infections, ingrown toenails, and bunions. Podiatrists also treat warts, arch disorders, flat feet, and athlete's foot. They are trained in the latest medical and surgical techniques to diagnose and treat diseases, injuries, and abnormalities of the feet and ankles through medical, surgical, and biochemical means.

Podiatrists perform the following tasks:

- Diagnose ailments, such as tumors, ulcers, fractures, skin or nail diseases, and deformities, utilizing urinalysis, blood tests, and x-rays.
- Treat conditions, such as corns, calluses, ingrown nails, tumors, shortened tendons, bunions, cysts, and abscesses by surgical methods.
- Correct deformities by means of plaster casts and strapping.
- Treat bone, muscle, and joint disorders.
- Treat deformities by mechanical and electrical methods, such as whirlpool or paraffin baths and short wave and low voltage currents.
- Prescribe corrective footwear.
- Prescribe drugs.
- Make and fit prosthetic appliances.
- Advise patients concerning continued treatment of disorders and foot care to prevent recurrence of disorders.
- Refer patients to physician when symptoms indicative of systemic disorders, such as arthritis or diabetes, are observed in feet and legs.

Most Podiatrists practice as generalists, treating all kinds of foot ailments. Some specialize in foot surgery, orthopedics (bone and joint disorders), children's foot disorders, foot disorders common to older persons, or sports medicine.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Podiatrists include:

- Reading Comprehension – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.

- **Active Listening** – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- **Critical Thinking** – Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
- **Speaking** – Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- **Judgment and Decision Making** – Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
- **Biology** – Knowledge of plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.
- **Medicine and Dentistry** – Knowledge of the information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
- **Deductive Reasoning** – The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
- **Problem Sensitivity** – The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
- **Finger Dexterity** – The ability to make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble very small objects.
- **Inductive Reasoning** – The ability to combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Podiatrists practice in offices, group practices, or clinics. They generally employ podiatric assistants, nurses, clerical personnel, and other health professionals. Most podiatric physicians are in private practice, and there is growing

recognition of their value in Preferred Provider Organizations (PPO) and Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO).

Union Membership

Few Podiatrists are covered by a union contract. However, they often belong to the American Podiatric Medical Association and the California Podiatric Medical Association. They may also belong to other professional organizations such as the Academy of Ambulatory Foot Surgery.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

In early 2003, there were about 2,100 licensed Podiatrists in California. Opportunities to establish new practices, as well as to enter salaried positions should be favorable throughout the forecast period.

Trends

Many private health plans and Medicare cover acute medical and surgical foot care, including leg braces, x-rays, and foot casts but do not cover the costs of routine care of the feet such as the removal of corns and calluses. Since disposable income is expected to rise, more people will be paying Podiatrists for those services not covered by health insurance.

Broader participation in physically active sport activities such as running, softball, basketball, volleyball, tennis, soccer, and aerobics that tend to aggravate foot disorders should increase the need for podiatry treatment. A growing older population in need of care for foot ailments and injuries should also spur demand for podiatric services.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Podiatrists 2002 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$30.09	to	\$48.28
Average hourly wage	\$37.86		
Average annual wage	\$78,745		

Source: Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID

Nationally, newly licensed Podiatrists with two or fewer years of experience earn over \$60,000 a year. However, setting up a new podiatric practice entails an investment of about \$50,000 to \$100,000 for equipment and space. Some of those who have opened new facilities reported that it took them the first few years in practice just to recover the start-up expense. The cost of operating an office depends on its size, location and whether it is a group practice or an independent practice.

Podiatrists working for the State of California earn from \$5,552 to \$6,748 per month when they enter State civil service. More experienced State-employed Podiatrists earn from \$6,105 to \$7,420 a month.

Hours

Podiatrists generally work from 35 to 40 hours a week, which may include some evening hours. Those who work for hospitals may be required to work evenings or weekends.

Benefits

Those Podiatrists who are employed by others are generally offered a generous benefit package that includes retirement, health, dental, and vision care.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

To be admitted to podiatric training, students must have at least three years of undergraduate premedical studies and pass the Medical Colleges Admissions Test (MCAT). Almost all entering students training have a baccalaureate or advanced degree. Training includes:

- Completion of a 4,000-hour program at an accredited college of podiatric medicine.
- Completion of a one-year resident surgery program in a general acute care facility.

There are seven approved colleges in the nation:

- School of Podiatric Medicine at Samuel Merritt College, Oakland, California
- Barry University School of Graduate Medical Sciences, Miami Shores, Florida
- Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine at Finch University of Health Sciences, North Chicago, Illinois
- College of Podiatric Medicine and Surgery at Des Moines University, Des Moines, Iowa
- New York College of Podiatric Medicine, New York, New York
- Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio
- Temple University School of Podiatric Medicine, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

High school or college students considering podiatry as a career should take a premedical educational program. Courses include the biological sciences, chemistry, physics, mathematics, social sciences, and English. Students should have scientific aptitude, manual dexterity, interpersonal skills, and an understanding of business practices.

Personal qualities should include a high standard of ethics and integrity, a desire to expand one's knowledge and skills, and the ability to inspire confidence.

Licensing and Certification

Licensing of Podiatrists is administered by the California Board of Podiatric Medicine. Candidates for licensing must:

- Graduate from an approved college or school of podiatric medicine.
- Pass the State Board written and oral licensing examinations.
- Pass the National Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners exam.
- Complete a one-year approved residency program.

Separate certification by the State Department of Health Services must be obtained before a Podiatrist operates x-ray apparatus.

Clearance from the State Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation is also necessary before a license can be issued. Applicants must submit fingerprint cards as a part of the clearance process.

Continuing Education

Licenses are valid for two years. Fifty hours of continuing medical education as well as approved cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training must be completed during that two-year period to satisfy the continuing education requirements for license renewal.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Graduates should register with their college placement service before graduation and then apply directly to hospitals, podiatric groups, and civil service agencies. Another alternative is to read ads in professional journals for associate positions or opportunities to buy an established practice from a podiatrist retiring or leaving the area. Personal visits to local Podiatrists can be helpful in getting leads.

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Private firms are listed in the yellow pages under Podiatrists. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

Since Podiatrists mostly work in private practice, professional advancement, rather than promotion, is the usual long-range goal. By expanding clientele, Podiatrists can increase their income and earn greater recognition in their field. Success generally means an increased number of referrals from other medical professionals.

For some Podiatrists, advancement may mean becoming a specialist in surgery, working with children, or obtaining certification to practice a podiatric specialty through the American Board of Podiatric Surgery, the American Board of Podiatric Orthopedics and Primary Podiatric Medicine, or the American Board of Podiatric Public Health.

Others may desire a teaching position at a podiatry college or have the opportunity to engage in research projects. Podiatrists serving on hospital staffs may promote to administrative or supervisory positions.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The School of Podiatric Medicine at
Samuel Merritt College
370 Hawthorne Avenue
Oakland, CA 94609
(510) 869-6511
www.ccpm.edu

American Podiatric Medical Association
9312 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 571-9200
(800) 275-2762
www.apma.org

California Podiatric Medical Association
2430 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95816
(916) 448-0248
www.podiatrists.org

Medical Board of California
Board of Podiatric Medicine
1420 Howe Avenue, Suite 8
Sacramento, CA 95825-3229
(916) 263-2647
www.dca.ca.gov/bpm

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

Pharmacists	No. 159
Veterinarians and Veterinary Inspectors	No. 282
Physicians and Surgeons	No. 319
Dentists	No. 377
Chiropractors, Doctors of Chiropractic Medicine	No. 547

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)
Podiatrists 29-1081

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)
Podiatrists 29-1081.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)
Podiatrists 32111

DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)
Podiatrist 079.101-022